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## **Solar power fan to open southern shop**

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SOUTHLANDERS had been slow to warm to solar power, but it offered the little man a way of hitting back at the power companies, Energy Design Southland owner Colin Ladbroke said.

Energy Design opens Tay Street retail premises on Monday offering solar, wind and energy efficiency alternatives to the national grid.

"I believe the whole electrical system which the taxpayer paid for, which should be a public service, has been turned into a money grubber for guys in Wellington," Mr Ladbroke said.

In the past 20 years power bills had gone up 800 percent but only large commercial operations had the leverage to negotiate better rates, he said.

Besides providing a range of power-bill busting equipment, the company could do energy design checks to find cheap ways of paying less to the power companies.

Efficiency audits attacked not only power use but supposedly fixed costs such as line charges, Mr Ladbroke said.

Power-bill busting equipment stretched from long-life light bulbs to solar-powered water heaters and ram pumps.

Solar was an option for Southland.

"Southlanders believe that they live in a cold climate. They believe the North Island propaganda," Mr Ladbroke said.

But even in mid-winter, solar panels in Invercargill were heating water to 24degC -- cutting power required. Southland had long sunlight hours and panels were only 2 percent less effective here than in Auckland.

Mr Ladbroke said his family of four had lived with the technology and cut electricity bills in half.

Setting up the shop in Invercargill was a gamble, but home shows had shown the interest was there.

Installing a solar water cylinder and panels in the ceiling would cost about \$5300, but it would pay for itself in about six years, he said.

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